US Department Of The Interior
Indian Affairs
OFFICE OF FACILITIES, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES
MANAGEMENT SUMMARY
APRIL 2012

Radon Gas Testing Underway; Improved Ventilation Key to Resolving Most Radon Issues

Rocky Mountain Region's Blackfeet Dorm and St. Stephens Indian School are pilot testing locations to inaugurate OFMC's radon testing.

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OFMC began radon gas testing of the 183 BIE-funded schools and dormitories—plus some 3,500 employee living quarters—in February with pilot testing at St. Stephens Indian School in Wyoming and at Blackfeet Dormitory and associated employee quarters in Montana.

For the short-term testing, radon-testing canisters were placed over a weekend at a variety of homogeneous areas inside the schools and homes. Results were collected after 48 hours and sent to a lab for analysis. A follow-up test will be conducted in the Blackfeet quarters.

Generally, if the lab analysis is lower than 4 pCi/L, radon is not an issue. For 4 pCi/L or higher, a follow-up test will be taken. A long-term test takes one year and can provide an average radon level. If that long-term testing indicates that radon is an issue, then a subsequent test will be taken.

Improving ventilation is often a solution for easing radon levels in a structure. Any mitigation for individual quarters or schools will take into consideration the building's foundation and HVAC type. Houses with crawl spaces can install vacuum systems with fans and piping to the roof line.

Radon is a naturally occurring invisible and odorless gas that can cause lung cancer. Radon comes from the decay of uranium which is found in soil and rocks all over the United States.

St. Stephens High School Facility Manager Ed Trujillo assists Environmental Scientist Chelsea Lorenz in placing a radon testing canister in the school's cultural classroom.

The new replacement high school at St. Stephens Indian School.